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ON TOP OF THE NEWS



Stationed next to the airport's old terminal building and overlooking Sonesta Island, this old DC-3 is the only aircraft on the Queen Beatrix Airport that's not going anywhere. It has been parked there for close to 10 years while the quest for its owners went on. Over the years it has become a recognizable, if somewhat ghostly, airport attraction. See story on page 3.

Chai Croes, Aruba Today

Rusty plane awaits its fate

By VANJA ODUBER
Aruba Today

Right next to the busy routine of Queen Beatrix Airport, where jumbos and other aircrafts from three continents repeatedly land and take off during the day, there is a plane that's not going anywhere.

The old plane, a rusty DC-3, has been parked inside the airport's borders and next to the old terminal building for close to ten years. It stands there poetically overlooking the Sonesta Island, but more often than not induces uncomfortable

thoughts that its fractured appearance might be the result of an accident.

The story is, actually, quite simple. The plane is there because nobody claims it. According to the airport's authorities, it was grounded back in 1982, while flying under Brazilian registration PT KUD, because its papers were not in order.

The plane was then parked next to the old airport building together with some other old aircrafts. In 1988, when the government took down the building, the planes stationed next to it were sold. All except the DC-3, which was declared still capable of flying in a technical examination.

That same year, the DC-3 had finally changed ownership and became property of "Air America Inc.," registered as N301 Alfa Kilo.

But the new owners never came to claim it and instead left a local company, Oduber Aviation, in charge of the aircraft's restoration.

In an attempt to contact the U.S. owners for further details, Oduber Aviation employees found out that the supposed phone number of "Air America Inc." was private and actually belonged to a family.

In what is now considered as an anecdote among Aruban airport officials, the family responded that they wouldn't

mind having a plane, but preferably one that could fly.

Some offers for the plane were received by the government after the failed attempt at purchase. According to airport officials, a certain Venezuelan, Mario Manchetti, was willing to pay \$1,000 for the aircraft. It looks like the government, which never responded to this offer, will have to pay in the end to remove the plane from the airport grounds.

And so, like in a story about the ugly duckling, the old abandoned DC-3 is looking for an owner to take care of it. But as the time passes by, and the aircraft's looks become more ghostly, chances are it won't ever turn into a swan again. □